

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 INT-05 AGR-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DOUALA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, EPAP, GB, XA

SUBJ: INTER-AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOOD

REF: LIBREVILLE 1566 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. SUBJECT CONFERENCE HELD LIBREVILLE DECEMBER 16-22 SAW WIDE DISCUSSION ON CURRENT PROBLEMS IN WOOD SECTOR AND POSSIBLE METHODS FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS. CONFERENCE DECIDED TO ESTABLISH ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN WOOD PRODUCERS, PURPOSE OF WHICH WILL BE TO HOLD FURTHER INTER-AFRICAN DISCUSSIONS AND INITIATE DISCUSSIONS WITH CONSUMERS. NEXT MEETING OF CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FIRST HALF OF APRIL 1975 IN BANGUI. END SUMMARY.

2. DELEGATIONS FROM ALL AFRICAN ADDRESSEE, PLUS CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA, MET IN LIBREVILLE DECEMBER 16-22 FOR FIRST INTER-AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOOD ECONOMY. CONFERENCE OPENED BY PRESIDENT BONGO, WHO GAVE MILD WELCOMING SPEECH STRESSING CURRENT PROBLEMS IN WOOD SECTOR, NEED FOR AFRICANS TO WORK OUT THESE PROBLEMS TOGETHER AND IN CONCERT WITH CONSUMERS AND DESIRABILITY OF CREATING PERMANENT ORGANIZATION TO ACHIEVE THESE ENDS. BONGO STATED ORGANIZATION SHOULD NOT BE BASED ON AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD CONSUMERS, BUT RATHER SHOULD TRY TO ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION.

3. FINAL COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT ECONOMICS OF WOOD SECTOR OF MOST AFRICAN WOOD EXPORTERS DOMINATED BY FOREIGN INTERESTS, WHICH DO NOT ALLOW PRODUCERS TO RECEIVE FAIR REVENUES FROM THEIR FORESTS, THAT COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES OF WOOD PRODUCTS OFTEN TAKE PLACE OUTSIDE CONTROL OF PRODUCER STATES; AND THAT SMALL DEGREE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION OF PRODUCING STATES AND SUCCESSIVE AND EXCESSIVE INCREASES IN FREIGHT CHARGES FOR WOOD PRODUCTS DO NOT AID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THESE COUNTRIES.

4. CONFERENCE THUS ADOPTED SEVERAL MEASURES TO MEET ACTUAL CRISIS. ONE WAS CREATION OF PERMANENT INTER-AFRICAN ORGANIZATION FOR COOPERATION IN MATTERS OF FOREST ECONOMY AND WOOD COMMERCE. AD HOC COMMITTEE CHOSEN TO DRAFT TEXTS SETTING UP THIS ORGANIZATION. MOTION ADOPTED COMMENDING COOPERATION OF CONFERENCE MEMBERS ON QUESTION OF FREIGHT CHARGES, PROTESTING GENERAL INCREASE IN FREIGHT CHARGES BY CERTAIN MARITIME CONFERENCES AND INSTRUCTING CONFERENCE PRESIDENT TO TRANSMIT MOTION TO MARITIME CONFERENCES CONCERNED. NEXT MEETING OF CONFERENCE SET FOR FIRST HALF OF APRIL 1975 IN BANGUI, EXACT DATE OF WHICH WILL BE WORKED OUT BY GABONESE AND CENTRAL AFRICANS.

5. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, GABONESE DIRECTOR OF WATER AND FORESTS ROGOMBE STATED THAT GABONESE CONSIDERED CONFERENCE TO HAVE BEEN SUCCESS AND THAT DISCUSSION HAD BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FRANK AND WIDE RANGING. WHILE HE REALIZED THAT SOLUTION TO CURRENT WOOD CRISIS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON SOLUTION TO WORLD ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, ROGOMBE STATED THAT AT LEAST AFRICANS ARE COORDINATING ACTIONS AND HOPEFULLY AT SOME POINT WILL SIT DOWN WITH CONSUMERS AND DISCUSS PROBLEMS IN ORDER TO LIMIT DAMAGE. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT CREATION OF QUOTE WOOD OPEC END QUOTE NOT POSSIBLE (AND IN FACT NOT DESIRED), ROGOMBE STATED THAT AFRICAN PRODUCERS HAVE A QUOTE LEGITIMATE END QUOTE INTEREST IN

MARKET FOR THEIR PRIMARY PRODUCTS. BEFORE THERE WAS NO ORGANIZATION IN INTERNATIONAL WOOD MARKET AS EVERYONE CUT AS MUCH WOOD AS THEY COULD WITH LITTLE REGARD TO PRICE, BUT NOW LAWS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND BETTER UNDERSTOOD. ROGOMBE ECHOED PRESIDENT BONGO'S REMARKS, STRESSING THAT ORGANIZATION NOT INTENDED TO BE ONE OF CONFRONTATION, BUT RATHER COOPERATION BETWEEN PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS. FRENCH FORESTRY SOURCES HAD SIMILAR COMMENTS ON CONFERENCE RESULTS.

6. COMMENT: CONFERENCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL IN FOSTERING DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG AFRICAN WOOD PRODUCERS. HOWEVER, EFFECT THESE DISCUSSIONS WILL HAVE ON CURRENT WOOD SITUATION LIKELY TO BE SLIGHT. DESPITE HINT BY ROGOMBE THAT AFRICANS MIGHT TRY TO CONTROL PRODUCTION IN ORDER TO INSURE QUOTE ORDERLY MARKET END QUOTE (READ HIGH PRICES), THIS UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH SUCCESS--AND CERTAINLY NOTHING LIKE SUCCESS OF OPEC--BECAUSE OF NUMBER AND DIVERSITY OF WORLD WOOD PRODUCERS. COUNTRYMAN

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